

Initiative Measure No. 1173

filed April 26, 2011

BILL REQUEST

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

AN ACT Relating to presidential electors; amending RCW 29A.56.320; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.** Good government begins with fair elections. And yet at least every four years, voters of Washington state and around the country express their strong displeasure with the system we presently use to elect our president. In as much as the legislature attempted to correct the problem by enacting RCW 29A.56.300, the present winner take all method of allocating electors is still unpopular, unfair, and unrepresentative of the consensus of voters and does not reflect the will of the people of our state.

The founders of our nation devised the electoral college system for good reasons that still apply. However, over time that system has been perverted by altering it from a consensus to a winner take all outcome that violates the original intent and purpose of it's design. In our electoral college system we actually vote for a slate of twelve electors, not the candidates. The chosen electors then convene to vote for a president and vice-president. It is therefore unreasonable and impractical that a one vote plurality of the popular vote should award to one presidential ticket all twelve electors. A proportional method of allocating electors would provide the benefits of both the electoral college and the popular vote systems of choosing our president and vice president. Therefore, the people propose that all relevant state laws be changed to provide Washington

voters a popular proportional system of selecting presidential electors whereby electors are apportioned based on the percentage of votes each candidate receives. Simply dividing one hundred percent by the total number of electors would yield the percentage of votes needed to earn an elector. With twelve electors now allotted to our state, a candidate would gain one elector for each 8.333 percent of the total vote count. If all electors are not allocated based on the 8.333 percent necessary for an elector, then the candidate with the highest percentage of votes of the remaining balance would be allocated an elector, and so forth until all electors are apportioned. If a tie occurs in the remaining balance, then the candidate with the highest overall vote total would be allotted the elector. Therefore, in a close two-way race, a candidate with fifty-nine percent of the vote would rightly get seven electors to the opponent's five, not all twelve. With just fifty-one percent of the total, the candidate wins six electors, not all. In a close three-way race, a candidate with a simple plurality of thirty-four percent would get four electors, not all twelve.

A popular proportional electoral system would give citizens more incentive to vote, knowing their vote counts for something and actually affects the outcome. It would allow votes for third-party and independent candidates to, if not win the election, at least register some influence on the election. With all our state's electors in play, presidential candidates would be more inclined to campaign in our state and directly address our concerns. Our great state deserves a fair election system that reflects the aspirations and intentions of its citizens. Too often votes are cast against a candidate or for the lesser of two unsatisfactory choices, or not at all. Washington state should lead our country to a future in which people are again excited to cast a vote for a presidential candidate. It is only right that we restore the electoral college system to its proper functioning as intended, and apportion electors fairly and representative of voters' preference and intention. In a true

democracy, it is a fundamental right and a valid expectation of citizens that their votes be counted and their voices be heard.

Sec. RCW 29A.56.320 and 2009 c 264 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

In the year in which a presidential election is held, each major political party and each minor political party or independent candidate convention held under chapter 29A.20 RCW that nominates candidates for president and vice president of the United States shall nominate presidential electors for this state. The party or convention shall file with the secretary of state a certificate signed by the presiding officer of the convention at which the presidential electors were chosen, listing the names and addresses of the presidential electors. Each presidential elector shall execute and file with the secretary of state a pledge that, as an elector, he or she will vote for the candidates nominated by that party. If however, the candidates to whom an elector is pledged do not have the necessary overall vote total nationwide to win the election outright, then the elector may vote for other candidates. The names of presidential electors shall not appear on the ballots. The votes cast for candidates for president and vice president of each political party shall be counted for the candidates for presidential electors of that political party((;however, if the interstate compact entitled the "agreement among the states to elect the president by national popular vote," as set forth in RCW 29A.56.300, governs the appointment of the presidential electors for a presidential election as provided in clause 9 of Article III of that compact, then the final appointment of the presidential electors for that presidential election shall be in accordance with that compact)).